Vol.1 No.1

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This book is intended for readers aged 18 and up. It may contain themes considered “mature.”

ASHES, ASHES

JD MORVAN WALTER REY MACUTAY

ASHES ASHES

MAGNETIC™

JD MORVAN
AUTHOR

REY MACUTAY
ARTIST

WALTER
COLORS

BASED ON THE NOVEL "RAVAGE" BY **RENÉ BARJAVEL**

Translation by Jeremy Melloul
Localization and Editing by Mike Kennedy
Layout and Lettering by Chris Northrop

MAGNETIC™

ISBN: 978-1-951719-12-8
Library of Congress Control Number: 2021909391

Ashes, Ashes by Morvan, Macutay, and Walter, Published 2021 by Magnetic Press, LLC.
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Printed in China.

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PATRIARCH!

PATRIARCH!

PATRIARCH!

I'M HERE...

THE BLACKSMITH FROM MONT VENTOUX CHOSE HIS HIDEOUT WELL, PATRIARCH.

LA CADIERE-D'AZUR SEEMS IMPREGNABLE.

HIS LORD IS FOOLISH TO STAND AGAINST ME.

HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE'S RISKING BY KEEPING THAT INSTRUMENT OF MISFORTUNE IN HIS TERRITORY.

I'M AFRAID WE WON'T BE ABLE TO REACH IT. WE'VE TAKEN TOO MANY LOSSES...

YOUR SONS ARE DISCOURAGED.

THEN IT'S UP TO ME TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE.

PATRIARCH, WAIT...

YOU CAN'T DO THAT.

IT'S TOO RISKY.

IF SOMETHING BAD HAPPENS TO YOU, WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO US?

YOU'LL CONTINUE TO HONOR THE PRINCIPLES THAT BLANCHE AND I INSTILLED IN YOU.

TRUE HAPPINESS IS FOUND IN THIS SIMPLICITY.

BUT, AT YOUR AGE... THIS IS UNREASONABLE...!

YOU'RE 130...

129!

IF WE DO NOTHING, IT'LL BE THE END OF THE WORLD ALL OVER AGAIN!

I CAN'T STAND IDLE AND LET THAT HAPPEN!

?!

LOOK, THERE...

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

IT'S REALLY HIM...

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT...

THE PATRIARCH!

IT'S THE PATRIARCH!

DON'T BE AFRAID, HE'S JUST AN OLD MAN!

GUT HIM!

YOU WON'T GET INSIDE, FRANCOIS.

YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO STOP ME, ALBERT.

I HAVE TO DESTROY THE EVIL AT ITS ROOT.

I'VE DEDICATED 100 YEARS OF MY LIFE TO DESTROYING SUCH THINGS. TO PROTECT FUTURE GENERATIONS.

EXACTLY, THIS INVENTION IS THE FUTURE!

IT'LL MAKE WORKING THE FIELDS EASIER, MAKE TRADE WITH OTHER REGIONS SIMPLER, AND ALLOW US TO FIGHT OFF BANDIT RAIDS.

RIDICULOUS!

HAS IT BEEN SO LONG SINCE THE CATACLYSM THAT YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THE LESSON IT TAUGHT US?

I TAUGHT YOU ALL HOW MANKIND LOST ITS WAY PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THEIR DESIRE TO MAKE LIFE SIMPLER!

THEY FORGOT HOW TO USE THEIR OWN HANDS! THEIR USELESS FLESH MELTED AROUND THEIR BONES!

ALL THE KNOWLEDGE IN THE WORLD ONCE STORED WITHIN THEIR BRAINS WAS REDUCED TO SIMPLY OPERATING THOSE MACHINES...

THEY BUILT THOUSANDS OF DIFFERENT MACHINES, EACH ONE REPLACING A BASIC FUNCTION...

...MACHINES TO WORK, WALK, LOOK, AND LISTEN FOR THEM...

...THEN, WHEN BY THE WILL OF GOD ALL THE MACHINES STOPPED AT ONCE, MANKIND FOUND ITSELF LIKE AN OYSTER TORN FROM ITS SHELL IN A STORM OF SCRAP METAL...

THEY HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO DIE!

YOUR TIME IS OVER, PATRIARCH...

IF YOU'D OPEN YOUR EYES, YOU'D SEE THAT EVERYONE HAS HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR IMPERIALISM...!

YOU'RE A FOOL!

ENOUGH OF YOUR MONOMANIACAL RESTRICTIONS FORCING THEM TO LIVE LIKE PEASANTS!

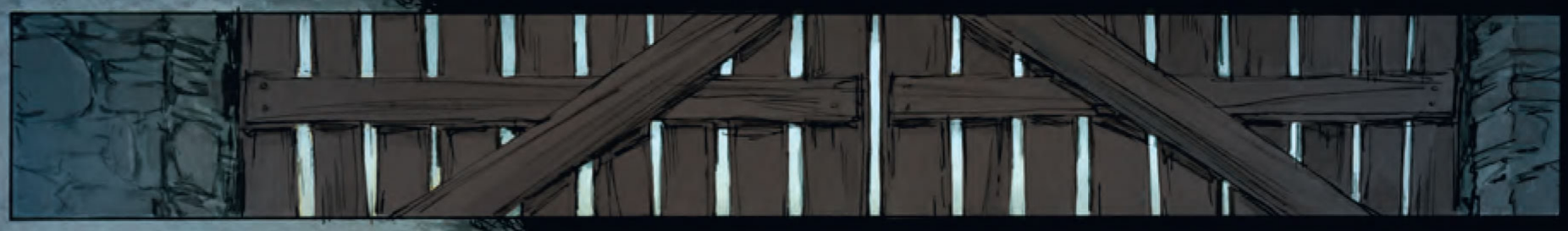
STAGNANCY ISN'T A VIRTUE, FRANCOIS!

YOUR CULT OF PERSONALITY STILL TERRORIZES THE SILENT MAJORITY! BUT THE BRAVEST AMONG THEM HAVE STARTED WHISPERING...

STOP TALKING AND FIGHT!

EVEN IF YOU SURVIVE TODAY, YOU WON'T ESCAPE THE REVOLUTION THAT'S COMING!

I SAID SHUT UP!



STOP!

STOP RIGHT NOW!

WHAT?!

MARSEILLE, FRANCE. JUNE 3RD, 2052.

THIS IS FRANCOIS DESCHAMPS.

YOU SOUND DISTRACTED, FRANCOIS. AM I INTERRUPTING SOMETHING?

NOT AT ALL, HEADMASTER LIOT. I WAS JUST DOZING OFF A LITTLE.

I STOPPED AT THE OLD PORT TERRACE WHILE WAITING FOR MY TRAIN TO PARIS...

WELL, IT'S STILL TOP SECRET, BUT I JUST GOT THE TEST RESULTS...

...YOU CAME IN FIRST PLACE IN THE ENTRANCE EXAM FOR THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL CHEMISTRY.

WITHOUT A DOUBT, YOU'RE THE PRIDE OF MY PREP SCHOOL!

THANK YOU, SIR. I WON'T LET YOU DOWN. AND I'LL KEEP THIS INFORMATION PRIVATE.

BUT... BETWEEN YOU AND ME, I'M NOT SURPRISED.

DID SOMEONE ALREADY TELL YOU?

NO...

...SOME OF MY COMPETITORS COULD HAVE KEPT ME FROM GETTING THE HIGHEST SPOT ON THE PODIUM, BUT I KNOW WHAT I'M WORTH AND WHAT I'VE ACHIEVED.

I'M NOT TRYING TO BE VAIN, IT'S JUST A SIMPLE AWARENESS OF MY WORTH COMPARED TO THE CROWD OF OTHER CANDIDATES.

Gare de Marseille Saint-Charles

Former de partir pour Paris en 30 minutes.

13:40

AH... PLEASE EXCUSE ME, SIR. MY TRAIN WON'T WAIT FOR ME...

...THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR CALL.

POOR SAINT-CHARLES STATION...

...WHAT DID THEY DO TO YOU?

IS SOMETHING WRONG, SIR?

...I'LL BE FINE.

I... I'LL ADMIT... I DON'T LIKE FEELING HELPLESS LIKE THIS. YOU CAN'T CONTROL ANYTHING IN THESE THINGS...

...EVERY TIME I BOARD A TRAIN OR AN AIRPLANE, I FEEL LIKE I'M SURRENDERING PART OF MY FREE WILL...

IT'S OKAY TO BE A LITTLE SCARED...

OH, I'M NOT, I ASSURE YOU.

WHATEVER YOU SAY...

...LUCKY FOR YOU THE TRIP TO PARIS ONLY TAKES TWENTY-TWO MINUTES!